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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC #03906-84
6 July 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Vice Chairman, National Intelligence Council

FROM: Fritz W. Ermarth
National Intelligence Officer for USSR-EE

SUBJECT: US-Soviet/Incidents at Sea

1. I met yesterday with VADM J. A. ("Ace") Lyons who led the late-May delegation to Moscow to review incidents at sea under the standing agreement. There has been no cable reporting on these exchanges that I've seen, so Ace's perspective was of great use to me, especially as an input to the SNIE we're doing.

2. The meetings were very up beat. The Soviet navy rolled out the red carpet, initiated inquiries about an exchange of ship visits, broached the possibility of new arrangements to prevent incidents between fighters and airliners, and avoided a hostile response when, despite prior urgings that he not do so, the Admiral berated them about KAL. These encounters were among a series of indications over the last month or so that the Soviets have been trying to take the relationship with us onto a new tack.

3. The underlying attitude in Moscow remains bitterly hostile and belligerent, however. Ace brought back some current Soviet posters which vividly portray the vitriolic propaganda they are putting out (see attachments). Note the crudity and consistent linkage between the US and Nazism. Of course, this was standard fare in the 1950s and 1960s, and intermittently seen during the 1970s. Sovietologists are used to this and watch it calmly for the political signals conveyed. Yet one needs to ask from time to time what this kind of propaganda says about the Soviet political mentality.

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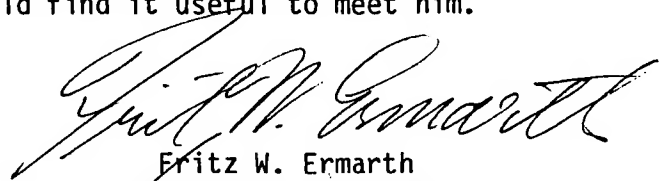
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4. I took the opportunity to ask Admiral Lyons, who is in charge of current operations, whether there is anything to the suspicion that US military exercises, especially Navy operations, have been so unusually aggressive lately that they may account for some of the signs of Soviet bellicosity we are seeing. He said that Navy operations had in recent years, at his own instigation, gotten much more subtle, sophisticated, and deceptive. As a result, the Soviet navy finds it much more difficult to track our operations in peacetime and would have lower confidence in its own capabilities in war. The Soviets are clearly unhappy over these trends. But, he said, we have not been unusually aggressive in, for example, flying toward their borders. Admiral Lyons noted the special importance during the next several months of avoiding military operations which inadvertantly provoke political tensions.

5. I've known Ace since my time on the NSC staff when he was a JCS rep on arms control talks. He is an unusual combination of toughness and clear-headedness. Whether we're bargaining or shooting, he strikes one as the right kind of officer to have facing the Soviets. Mr. McMahon knows him well, I understand. You would find it useful to meet him.



Fritz W. Ermarth
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